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WHITHER BOUND?

BY

A. M. M.

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THIS world is poor from shore to shore,
And, like a baseless vision,
Its lofty domes and brilliant ore,
Its gems and crowns are vain and poor—
There's nothing rich but heaven.

Empires decay and nations die,
Our hopes to winds are given;
The vernal blooms in ruins lie,
Death reigns o'er all beneath the sky—
There's nothing sure but heaven.

Creation's mighty fabric all
Shall be to atoms riven,
The skies consume, their planets fall,
Convulsions rock this earthly ball—
There's nothing firm but heaven.

WHITHER BOUND?

CHAPTER I.

The Giver of Life.

Why should we fear youth's draught of joy,
If pure, would sparkle less?
Why should the cup the sooner cloy
That God hath deigned to bless?

IT is a beautiful world which God has given to his human children to dwell in—beautiful in its manifold aspects of external nature. Its skies, pure azure or flecked with snowy clouds, or glowing with the rich hues of sunrise or sunset; its emerald, dew-besprinkled turf; its sparkling sapphire waves; its mighty mountains, with their shadowy clefts and

summits crowned with snow or wreathed with floating mists; its lakes, lying placid between their mountain ramparts; its rich landscapes; its ever-varying beauties of lonely forest or rugged seashore; of sunshine and shade, storm and calm, spring and autumn, summer and winter,—all speak of the infinite resources and love of the Creator.

But though God has thus richly lavished his creative power on what is fitted to minister to our innocent enjoyment, he has by no means intended that the gifts he has bestowed on man shall *fill up* his heart and *satisfy* his nature. Not even the richest blessings that come from his bounteous hand—the blessings of human affection and love, which so sweeten and brighten our earthly lot—are intended to fill the cup of the soul's happiness and limit its aspirations. Could this be so, man would be an infinitely less noble being than his Maker intended him to be.

But it is *not* so. Let the most prosper-

ous life be imagined which it is possible to conceive. Let it be free from every external annoyance, every embittering element from without, every worrying care, every irritating loss, every harassing anxiety. Let it be filled up with congenial work, with delightful recreations, with the happiest and most loving social intercourse which life can afford. Let culture refine it, and luxury smooth its path, and all that is beautiful in nature and art combine to throw a charm around it. Still, amidst all its sensuous delights, the *soul* will remain unsatisfied; still, in its earthly paradise, it will feel irrepressible longings for that which no mere earthly paradise can supply. Still, in the midst of external calm and harmony, inextinguishable stirrings of evil will disturb the peaceful flow of life, and taint with their baleful influences the perfumed air.

The only *real*, *satisfying* happiness of man must always lie in union and communion with God; and his present con-

dition, until renewed by the mysterious change which is wrought by God's Holy Spirit, with the consent and choice of the individual, is one of separation and alienation from his heavenly Father.

The prodigal son has wandered away into the far country, and tries to satisfy his hunger with the husks he finds there. It is, indeed, one of the most striking and universal proofs of our fallen nature that we are inclined so systematically and persistently to turn away from Him who is the true life of our souls, and to seek our happiness in the transitory and unsatisfactory pleasures of a mutable world. Unlike Adam in his pure, unfallen condition, when he delighted in holding direct communion with his Maker, we continually do as he did when sin had overtaken him, and hide ourselves "from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden." The lightest trifles, too frivolous to seem worthy of occupying the serious attention of any being endowed with an immortal

soul, will often serve as *hiding-places*, convenient refuges from the oppressive and unwelcome thoughts of that God from whose presence the unrenewed soul instinctively shrinks, as if he were its most determined enemy, instead of being, as he is, its infinitely loving, infinitely patient Father and Friend, from whom every good gift in its possession has been derived.

And this perversity in man, in thus turning away from the ever-flowing spring of living water and hewing out for himself "broken cisterns which can hold no water" to satisfy his thirst, is undoubtedly the cause of by far the greater proportion of the unsatisfied longings, the heavy hearts, the sadness which mingles so largely in the cup of human life. To it are traceable the *ennui*, the dissatisfaction, which often exist in the breasts of those whose lot seems the most richly filled with earthly blessings—the jarring notes in chords that would otherwise breathe nothing but harmony, the wailing minor key that ever

mingles in the world's most joyous music. Nay, though the bereavements and afflictions which come direct from the hand of God in loving but inscrutable Providence must often, in our course through this world, cause tears to flow and grief to hold for a time its natural sway, yet would such sorrows never occasion broken hearts and blighted lives if God were felt to be the sure stay and inalienable possession of the soul—able to supply the want of what he takes away, to communicate to the sorrowing one that "peace which passeth all understanding;" so that, in the loss of property, of beloved ones, of all which made life externally pleasant, the bereaved ones could say, in no mere form of speech, but in sober, heartfelt truth: "*Yet* I will rejoice in the Lord; I will *joy* in the God of my salvation."

If this heavenly peace can give comfort and joy in the midst of outward darkness and desolation, equally will it add brightness when all is outwardly bright, and keep

the sense of enjoyment in God's blessings ever fresh, ever healthful, ever free from satiety. How often does the sigh of weariness, in the midst of all that the world can give, the restless seeking, in excitement and change of scene, for the rest and satisfaction which they cannot give, or at best only for some fleeting moments, testify to the insufficiency of the enjoyment of outward things to fill up the longing, aspiring heart of man! Illustrations might easily be multiplied to convince those who may think that a more favored earthly lot—the possession of some coveted blessing as yet beyond their reach—would give them the happiness they are seeking, of the impossibility of finding in such things any full, unalloyed, *satisfying* happiness.

When Alexander the Great wept because, having conquered one world, there was not another to subdue, it was not simply because his conquering career was stayed. That was the *ostensible* reason; but another more subtle element mingled

in the conqueror's tears. It was the sense of disappointment which *will* always dim the joy of mere earthly success; the feeling that the glory of his prize had faded in his grasp; the cold chill of the conviction that the object for which he had been straining every nerve had been gained indeed, but had failed to satisfy. And if another world, and a hundred more worlds after that, could have been granted to his ambition, the result, when the last one lay subdued at his feet, would have been just the same. Not the possession of a thousand worlds can suffice for the happiness of the soul, which it is for the infinite God alone to satisfy and fill.

The experiment which, in the case of the Macedonian conqueror, had its trial on so grand a scale has been often repeated on the smaller scale of every-day life, with exactly the same result; as many an outwardly prosperous life—ever aspiring, yet ever disappointed, always fancying it has reached its rest, but always

finding the demon of dissatisfaction and unrest lurking to seize its victim amid the blossoms of its flowery path—fully exemplifies. Often, indeed, does this unsatisfied feeling—acquiring a depth and intensity proportioned to the depth and intensity of the nature of the individual, to his capabilities of enjoying and suffering—reach such a point as to neutralize all the blessings of his earthly lot, though the "lines" may have fallen to him in most "pleasant places," and to wrap him in the dark cloud of irresistible depression which one who knew it but too well described as

> "The settled ceaseless gloom
> Which once the Hebrew wanderer bore,
> Which cannot look beyond the tomb,
> And cannot hope for rest before."

A young man, heir to a fair estate, was left to the sole and undisturbed enjoyment of his heritage. He had not attained its possession through the death of any near or beloved relatives, so that the sorrow of

bereavement did not mingle in his cup of prosperity. His reputation was fair and unblemished; he had, so far as the most intimate of his friends were aware, no cause of remorse or self-reproach, no secret sorrow to prey upon his heart. Life seemed opening before him with the brightest prospects; he was the envied of many, who thought that a lot like his could be darkened by no shadow of unhappiness. And yet, one bright morning, when all nature seemed rejoicing and his own fair property was looking its brightest and loveliest, he went with his gun to a knoll from whence he could survey it as it lay spread around him in its autumn beauty, and there, with his own hand, put an end to his life. None could assign any cause for the deed, at which all marveled, save a strange, causeless depression that had gradually been creeping over him—a "melancholy" springing from no outward source, but from the vague, inward sense of unrest and unsatisfied long-

ing which we have been endeavoring to describe.

Of course, it is only in extreme cases and in peculiar natures that this feeling can acquire such an intensity of strength; yet it may reasonably be doubted whether it is ever entirely absent from the enjoyments which are derived *solely* from "things seen and temporal," or even from the nobler pleasures and triumphs of thought, when pursued apart from the God in the enjoyment of whom is our true joy, in whose presence is fullness of joy, at whose right hand are rivers of pleasure.

Occasionally, indeed, in times of eager excitement or in the hot chase after some eagerly coveted prize, this secret uneasiness may be forgotten, overpowered by the pressure of the immediate sensations, but, with the coolness of the reaction that follows, it is there again. Even in our moments of crowning joy, the irrepressible sigh will arise from this perpetual

source of unrecognized sadness, and the disappointing revelation will force itself upon the reluctant heart that what seemed in the ideal dream to be all-sufficient for happiness proves in the reality to fall so far short of *satisfaction*.

When the secret histories of all hearts shall be read, how many "confessions" will there be of *disappointment in success*, quite as bitter as disappointment in failure has ever been described to be! And it must always be thus till the heart has found its true resting-place in the enjoyment, not of any of God's creatures, though they, in their own place, are given us "richly to enjoy," but of God himself, who alone can fulfill the requirements of the nature he has made in his own image and satisfy the aspirations of the restless heart. The very sadness we have tried to describe, which so pervades all things earthly, and which is simply *unsatisfied aspiration*, is a stimulus devised in God's infinite love and wisdom to incite us on-

ward to the possession of our true and noble heritage, of which we should lose sight and fall short did the earthly things that surround us afford us a satisfying repose. The goal to which our souls are tending is not in these things, transitory and fleeting; it is in things "eternal in the heavens." The city of our rest is not here; for "here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come."

So much for the incapacity of earthly blessings to give genuine happiness, or even rest and peace, in *themselves*.

How is it with those who, in the absence of all earthly sunshine to brighten their lot, rejoice in that restoration to communion with God which is offered them in an atoning Saviour, in the peace he has given them—"the peace which passeth understanding"—the joy which "no man taketh from them?"

Look at them in all times of the Christian Church. Look at Paul and Silas, imprisoned and suffering from cruel scour-

ing, making their dungeon walls resound with joyous hymns of praise; at Stephen, whose face, when he was surrounded by raging enemies ready to put him to a cruel death, shone like the face of an angel; at countless men and women, with feelings and desires like our own, who took *joyfully* the spoiling of their goods, and rejoiced in the loss of all things that they were counted worthy to suffer for Him who had redeemed them. Look at many a martyr since, in many a land, cheerfully leaving all that made life dear and going even joyously to prison and to death amid shame and anguish. We may see such men as John Bunyan, happy and cheerful in ignominious imprisonment; and may hear Madame Guyon, bereaved of her children, taken from dearly-loved friends, shut up in close confinement, deprived of every earthly solace and suffering every privation that the heart of a woman and a mother can feel, yet caroling such joyous strains as these:

"My heart within me sings,
It cannot long be sad;
For very joy it leaps and springs,
For Thou hast made me glad.

"Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage;
He fears no evil who doth take
God for his heritage."

—and many another song of happy trust besides, in circumstances as void of all earthly sunshine, showing how independent of all that is *without* it the heart of man can be made, when pervaded by the peace and joy which God can communicate.

Now, though it may be said that in the instances we have mentioned the sufferers were supported by their enthusiasm for the cause in which they suffered, this is only another mode of confessing that enthusiasm for the cause of Christ—the true King of men's hearts—will give a joy in suffering for his sake infinitely greater than enthusiasm for any earthly king or earthly cause has ever had power to be-

stow. Many an instance of heroic patriotism, of self-sacrificing devotion to an earthly sovereign, adorns the pages of history; but patient, brave, heroic as such sufferers have often been, we do not find the ardent, burning zeal and the *joy* in being counted worthy to suffer which characterize those whose love has been awakened in response to the love of a dying Saviour.

In the cases of every-day trial and suffering, of poverty and bereavement, which come in the ordinary course of human life, and have no "enthusiasm" or martyr-joy to alleviate them—where all would seem dull, prosaic, commonplace misery—do we not usually find a cheerful resignation, a peaceful contentment, a joyous hopefulness among *Christian* sufferers by such causes, which are often unknown in seemingly more favored abodes of earthly prosperity and apparently unclouded happiness, but where *earthly* happiness is made all in all? In poverty and sickness, in be-

reavement and loneliness, in the sharp anguish of sudden desolation, how often is God's upholding presence found to be a "very present help," giving consolation and hope, and even spiritual joy which enables the stricken heart to join in all sincerity in the apostle's expression: "sorrowing, yet alway rejoicing!"

Countless have been the testimonies to this mysterious bestowal of light in the darkness in every possible variety of character and every possible combination of circumstances. A dying girl, who had tasted to the full every pleasure that earth can afford, declared, as she lay on her couch of lingering pain, "*I have enjoyed more with my Bible in this room than in the gayest scenes I have ever known.*" A solitary man who spent sleepless nights of suffering from a painful disease was asked if he did not find the night very long. "No," he replied, "not at all; I thought of my Saviour's love, and was so happy!"

Into how many scenes of darkness and

sorrow has the same ray streamed brightly, making sunshine in a shady place! In the thick darkness of the choked coal-pits, under the shadow of impending death, in the privation and suffering of the besieged or the besiegers, amid the horror and dismay of the Indian mutiny, God's people have testified to the "perfect peace" he has given them, and have been able to enter into the exclamation of the sweet singer of Israel: "Thou hast put gladness in my heart more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased."

But if God can thus give his people light when all around is darkness, will he not also be the *true* light of their path when it lies amid brighter scenes? When life is opening fair and hopeful before us, when all that meets the outward eye seems bright and joyous, *his* presence, sought and felt, can make the joy deeper and the hope more buoyant, and the sense of happiness far more lasting and secure. For he is felt to be the true portion of the

soul which it would still retain though all else were swept away. In the cup "that God hath deigned to bless" there can be no bitterness neutralizing the sweet, no cloying satiety; the zest which he alone can impart to the blessings he has given will make it sweet and invigorating to the end. Advancing years and crowding cares cannot dull the brightness which the Father's smile can give, even to the "sere and yellow leaf" of approaching age. Even "the shadow feared of man" will appear but a stage in the progress to the Father's house—a mere phase in the growth and development of the spiritual life which is the soul's real existence; and it can be gladdened as truly as the spring-time of youth by the true light which cometh down from heaven.

Who cannot recall the image of a Christian old age, serene and bright, enjoying with fresh zest the blessings that remain to it, patiently and cheerfully bearing increasing infirmities as passing incon-

veniences, and looking onward to the nobler life in the "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" for which life has no fears and death no terrors, since its hope is fixed on the Rock of Ages which cannot be moved?

What earthly possession, then, can compare with *this*, which adds brightness to joyous hours and lifts the burden from sorrowing ones, which sustains in adversity and affliction and gives in prosperity that sense of satisfaction which prosperity alone cannot bestow, since

> "Only God himself suffices
> Those whom God alone creates!"

"There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift *thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.*"

> Too surely, every setting day,
> Some lost delight we mourn;
> The flowers all die along our way,
> Till we, too, die forlorn.

Such is the world's gay, garish feast,
In her first charming bowl
Infusing all that fires the breast,
And cheats th' unstable soul.

Unlike the feast of heavenly love
Spread at the Saviour's word
For souls that hear his call, and prove
Meet for his bridal board.

For is it Hope that thrills so keen
Along each bounding vein,
Still whispering glorious things unseen?
Faith makes the vision plain.

Or is it Love, the dear delight
Of hearts that know no guile,
That all around see all things bright
With their own magic smile?

Who but a Christian through all life
That blessing may prolong?
Who through the world's sad day of strife
Still chant his morning song?

Nor shall dull age, as worldlings say,
The heavenward flame annoy;
The Saviour cannot pass away,
And with him lives our joy.

Ever the richest, tenderest glow
Sets round the autumnal sun;

But there sight fails; no heart may know
The bliss when life is done.

Such is thy banquet, dearest Lord;
Oh give us grace to cast
Our lot with thine—to trust thy word,
And keep our best till last.

Thou inevitable day,
When to me a voice shall say,
Get thee up and come away.

All thine earthly journeys past,
Rise and make thee ready fast,
For thy latest and thy last.

Day deep hidden from our sight,
In impenetrable night,
Who may guess of thee aright?

Art thou distant, art thou near,
Shalt thou be more dark or clear,
Day with more of hope than fear?

Shalt thou come, not seen before,
Thou art standing at the door,
Saying, life and light are o'er?

Or, with slow and gradual pace,
Wilt thou leave me largest space,
To regard thee face to face?

Little recks it where or how,
If thou comest then or now,
With a smooth or angry brow.

Thou must come, and we must die;
Jesus, Saviour, stand thou by
When that last sleep seals mine eye.

CHAPTER II.

The Conqueror of Death.

Too surely, every setting day,
Some lost delight we mourn ;
The flowers all die along our way,
Till we, too, die forlorn.

ALMOST every reader is familiar with the story of Dionysius and Damocles. The latter, a courtier of Dionysius, the tyrant of Sicily, was dilating upon the power, the wealth, the magnificence of his royal master, and declared that no monarch had ever been greater or happier. "Hast thou a mind, Damocles," said the king, "to taste this happiness, and to know, by experience, what the enjoyments are of which thou hast so high an idea?" Gladly the courtier accepted the

tempting offer. A luxurious banquet was prepared, at which Damocles was placed in royal state on a gilded sofa lined with softest cushions and richest embroidery, a garland of roses on his head, fragrant odors perfuming the air, gold and silver plate gleaming around him, and the most exquisite delicacies covering the table before him. Beautiful pages stood around him, ready to obey his slightest order with the most respectful deference, and sweetest music filled the air. But just as Damocles, intoxicated with the delights of his position, was beginning to enjoy the pleasures so lavishly provided, he beheld, let down from the ceiling immediately above him, a keen and glittering sword suspended by a single hair. The enjoyments around him were at once forgotten. He sprang from his seat, and entreated to be allowed to retire from a position so luxurious and so magnificent, yet so full of terror.

This acted parable, by which the tyrant

made his courtier understand how far his supposed happiness was neutralized by the unseen dangers which encompassed him, is full of significance for all who are living without God and without hope beyond the present life, to whom this world is *everything* and death the end of all they know and love and prize.

What do they know of that other life beyond the tomb on which they shall so surely enter? The sword which is to cut them off from the only life they know is there, suspended invisibly above them; the hair by which it is upheld may snap at any moment—*must* snap eventually—yet how many, in the fearful position of the Sicilian courtier, throw themselves heart and soul into the pleasures of the feast, join in the revel and the song, and dream away in trivial pursuits the passing hours, heedless of the destruction which is swiftly hastening to overtake them! We would marvel at the conduct of a man who, knowing he might at any moment be

called away to an unknown land, should allow his attention to be absorbed by the merest trifles, and should omit to make the slightest preparation for his journey or to procure any information about his unknown destination. We should set down as a madman the man who, under sentence of death, should amuse himself in decorating his cell, should devote all his thoughts to feasting and diversion; yet wherein would such conduct be less wise than that of those who, with a burden of unforgiven sin upon their souls, a neglected Saviour and a forgotten and unreconciled God to meet, and an endless eternity of woe stretching as a *possibility*—nay, as a *probability*—before them, are yet completely absorbed in the petty concerns of a passing life which *must* end soon, and *may* end suddenly?

And yet, turn from it as they will and do, they can never *quite* shut out the thought of that dread, unknown eternity. It *will* recur again and again, an unwel-

come intruder to mar their peace, often at most unexpected moments. We have already spoken of the inability of earthly pleasures, enjoyed to their fullest extent, to give absolute satisfaction even in the present moment, for the reason that the soul was created for higher happiness than it can find in fountains that flow from earthly sources. But even *could* the enjoyment of the moment be perfect in *itself*, must it not always be liable to be marred by the sense of insecurity and instability which is ever ready to force itself into unpleasant prominence? Let a man have attained the summit of his earthly desires; let him be in possession and enjoyment of all the wealth, all the distinction, he has ever coveted; let every taste be indulged, every sense gratified; let his abode be perfect in beauty and luxury; let the pleasures of literature and domestic life and social intercourse be his in their fullest degree, while unbroken health and unabated sensibility enable him.

most thoroughly to enjoy the perfection of his lot. Yet, supposing him to be living only for *this* world, walking by sight and not by faith, must not the flow of enjoyment meet with a rude shock when the feeling arises, as arise it will, that all this must end before long; that behind this bright, gay, decorated life he is living there yawns a black abyss, unknown and terrible, into which he must eventually fall, and which may at any moment open to receive him? Curtain it off as he may with brilliant screens and gorgeous pictures, *it is there*, and it will make its presence felt. At any moment a single breath may blow aside the fragile screen and expose the dread vision which sends a chill shudder through his frame. In the midst of mirth and festivity, of joyous music and gleeful intercourse, a glance at the columns of a newspaper, a casual item of intelligence, may open up the vista of dread-inspiring darkness which is ever looming in the distance.

When an acquaintance drops into that yawning and silent tomb—when in the dead of night some vague alarm, some mysterious premonition, makes him feel as if he were already losing his hold of the possessions which he grasps with so desperate a clutch—who can describe the terror of the sensation that the grim Destroyer of earthly joys is swiftly though silently advancing upon him, and that ere long he must go out, naked as he came into the world, into the outer darkness, which his eager gaze may strive in vain to penetrate! Oh why, when such feelings come, sent in mercy to warn ere it be too late, why does he not turn while there is still time to the safety that is offered—to the Saviour and Guide who is ready to take his hand and lead him through that thick darkness to the many mansions of the Father's house, to the inexpressible joy of the things which God has provided for them that love him? But instead of doing this, and placing

themselves henceforward on an immutable resting-place of peace and safety, how many resolutely turn away from the unwelcome warning, content to stifle the thought of the evil day and forget as best they can, in the present pleasure, the danger that lies beyond!

Who has not felt, in standing by the silent couch on which the cold form of a corpse is laid, so rigid in its inanimate stillness, how poor and slight a thing our mortal life is; how awful a change is that which cuts off the living, sentient being from everything known and prized, and sends it bare, uncovered, stripped of every disguise, "from the comforts and enjoyments of life to the dark uncertainties of that state which is entered through death?"

This feeling will force itself even upon the most thoughtless in the awe-inspiring presence of death; and under its influence, temporary as it too often is, no exertion would seem too great, no toil too arduous, to secure that sense of safety, that lighting

up of the dark valley with joyous hope, which Christ offers without money and without price to all who will receive it. But the influence passes and the things of time and sense again assert their power, and death and eternity are once more forgotten. Strange infatuation, which leads men to act in the most momentous concerns with what in the ordinary transactions of life they would look upon as childish folly!

But where Christ *has* been accepted as the Redeemer of the soul, its everlasting portion and stay, with what different feelings is the great destroyer regarded! how faithful is found the promise of Christ to be with his people in the valley of the shadow of death! The Saviour's everlasting arms are around his dying disciple, and the King of Terrors appears only as a heavenly messenger commissioned to carry the wearied spirit from the troubles and cares of a perplexing world to the rest and peace prepared for it in its heavenly home.

How striking is the difference in this respect between those who are in Christ and those who are not, has been seen in many a season of trial and danger. As long as the current of life runs smooth and calm, with nothing to show the precipice and plunge which is so near, they whose life is that of *this* world only may often seem to have the advantage; their hearts may seem lighter, their tone gayer, their laugh more careless in its glee than that of their Christian companions, whose course is often a hidden warfare. But let a sudden danger arise—a danger which seems to bear the dreaded summons, "This night thy soul shall be required of thee"—and how quickly does the outward semblance of gayety fleet from the lips and eye, and the trembling tones and deadly pallor betray the agony of fear which the summons excites!

An ocean steamer was sailing for a distant port, bearing its precious freight of human life over a sea calm, but obscured

by fog. Its passengers, trusting to the pilot's watchful care, unthinking of danger, were amusing themselves in the various ways which their inclination prompted. Merry talk was going on, and bursts of uncontrollable merriment frequently followed some playful sally or witty rejoinder. Bright smiles were reflected from one face to another, undimned by a shadow of anxiety. Suddenly the shock of a collision was felt; the tidings ran like wildfire that the vessel had struck a rock, that the forward compartment was broken in, that it was fast filling. The peril seemed imminent; even the sailors dreaded to go below for an instant lest during that instant the steamer would sink. What a change had passed over that merry group of passengers! How pale and wan the bright faces had grown! how faint and trembling the tones of the lively jesters! Abject terror, overcoming all attempts at restraint, revealed how unprepared were most to meet the fate which they believed await-

ing them. But two or three of the number who, in the former time of gayety had seemed perhaps the gravest of the party, were calm and undismayed, even serene and cheerful, sustained themselves and endeavoring to sustain others with the hope in Christ which cheered them in life, and did not fail them when death seemed to be approaching. They alone could meet the prospect bravely, for the Saviour and Friend by their side had himself passed through its darkness, and they knew that he could lead them to the light beyond. The vessel, however, did *not* sink, the breach being wholly confined to the fore-compartment. In a short time the danger was over, and all was again quiet as before. Let us hope that that moment of deadly peril and fear was not without lasting effect on some, who were thus brought to realize as they had never before done that "in the midst of life we are in death."

Another incident of the same kind may

be mentioned. A steamboat plying on an American river suddenly met with a similar accident, fatal to the vessel, though from the nearness of the shore the passengers were all saved by means of boats. But for a few fearful minutes there was an awful suspense, lest the wrecked steamer might sink before deliverance could reach its trembling passengers. In the scene of terror and confusion, when life-belts were in eager request, and were first supplied to the women on board, one lady, who, calm and unmoved, felt, as she afterward said, "how great is the power of God to give perfect peace in moments of danger," gave proof of the security she experienced by requesting that she might be allowed to transfer her life-belt to some one who *feared* the death which had no terrors for her.

And in times where the danger was *not*, as in these cases, mercifully averted, where timbers crashed and gave way, letting down their living burden into the

seething deep, or where the filling ship sank like lead, strewing the sea with those who had been clinging to her for safety, how has this peace and hope been found adequate to support in the last extremity, when those who had it not gave way to utter despair! In the wreck of the "London," which some years ago excited so great a sensation, entailing the loss of so many lives, no one could help noticing the conduct of some Christian sufferers, who went through that trying scene with true Christian courage and like angels of mercy, endeavoring to impart to those around them the consolation which upheld themselves.

And in the destruction of the Kent East Indiaman, in 1825, when the flames which swallowed up the vessel in swift destruction added their horrors to the scene of death, the following lines were written and placed in a bottle, which was afterward washed ashore, and published by the finder:

"The ship, the Kent Indiaman, is on fire. Elizabeth, Joanna and myself commit our spirits into the hands of a blessed Redeemer. His grace enables us to be quite composed in the awful prospect of entering eternity.

"D. McGREGOR.

"1st March, 1825. Bay of Biscay."

These are only a few fugitive cases, taken almost at random from the hundreds which might be collected, exemplifying the same strengthening grace of God in the time of mortal peril. No mere sentimental imagination, no theory, however well constructed, no outside belief in the *facts* of Christianity, could have given this strength to meet a violent death, coming suddenly in the midst of life and health and busy projects, without that weakening of the vital tenacity and energy by illness which sometimes reconciles the weary sufferer, worn out by pain, to the thought of a death which seems to promise relief from physical suffering.

Nor less sure is God's strengthening grace in a dying hour, when the death which comes to all is preceded by the weakness and suffering through which its gradual approaches are discerned, and the soul from day to day is brought to realize more fully the near certainty of its lonely, mysterious departure from the world of sense to the world of spirit. True, the almost infinite varieties of mental peculiarities and physical influences, the power of some diseases to cause great mental depression, the failure of many Christians to walk in the light in which they *might* walk during life and health, cause an equal variety of deathbed experience. Even the truest, most conscientious Christians will find sins and lapses to repent, carelessness and coldness to regret, which in the near prospect of death will often cause deep sorrow, sometimes even serious misgivings as to whether the hope in Christ is a true one, and the longer the course of sin and impenitence has been,

and the longer deferred has been the turning to Christ, the more probable is it that the deathbed hope will often be clouded by the accusings of conscience—accusings from which the really impenitent man, who may have succeeded in deceiving himself to the last, will sometimes escape.

But though in the dying experience of the true child of God there may be many vicissitudes of feeling—seasons of darkness and mental suffering, doubts as to acceptance, anxiety regarding the sincerity of the Christian life, attacks and temptations from the great enemy of souls, unwilling to lose his prize—still through all these trials the everlasting arms are ever around him; he will not be left in the darkness of doubt; "at evening-time it shall be light" and peace and hope. No trusting Christian ever died in despairing anguish; how many an impenitent child of the world has done so, or failed to feel in his utmost need that his Saviour was with him, that to his care he could commit his

spirit when he went out alone into the untried, unknown *for ever!* In Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress—so true a parable of the soul's experience—Christian, when in the cold darkness of the dark river, was sorely tried with doubts and fears, but the faithful saying, "*Be of good cheer, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole,*" brought instant comfort. "With that," we are told, "Christian broke out with a loud voice, Oh, I see him again! and he tells me, When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; then he took courage, and the enemy was after that as still as a stone until he was gone over."

But how often, on the other hand, does the faithful, earnest Christian realize in the presence of death the joyous, unclouded confidence with which in the same parable Mr. Standfast declared!—"This river has been a terror to many; yea, the thoughts of it also have often frighted me; but now methinks I stand

easy, my foot is fixed upon that on which the feet of the priests that bare the Ark of the Covenant stood while Israel went over this Jordan." How often, too, is the case of Mr. Despondency and of Much-afraid, his daughter, realized, and they who through life seemed to have a troubled, doubtful experience, have gone down to the river singing and exclaiming, "Farewell, night! welcome, day!"

While joyous, exultant deathbeds are comparatively rare, depending on so many conditions which are rarely all realized, peaceful, trusting deaths, illumined by the most satisfying faith and hope, may be constantly witnessed among those who have made Christ their portion. When poverty and loneliness are added to the pain and discomforts of disease, as well as when loving friends surround the sufferer with all the alleviations that wealth and considerate affection can devise, how often have dying lips uttered such words as these, the *real* expressions of dying

believers!—"Longing to be with Jesus;" "Reposing under the shadow of the cross in perfect peace;" "Though I am walking through the valley of the shadow of death I fear no evil, for *he* is with me;" "I am so happy! Jesus is with me; I fear no evil while he is near;" "How happy am I lying here, waiting to go home to my Father's house!" "God is dealing very graciously with me; he is very pitiful and of tender mercy;" "My beloved is mine and I am his;" "For ever with the Lord."

From many a memoir of God's honored servants, and from many an obscure sick room of which the world never heard, might such sayings be multiplied endlessly, the genuine expressions of heartfelt faith and joy in that awful season which unveils all disguise and *compels* sincerity. Even from infant lips have come such joyous declarations of faith and hope in death as could only have been inspired by Him who careth so tenderly for the lambs of his flock. And among those who have

gone to prison and to death for his cause, how often from the cruel flames or the ghastly scaffold have gone up hymns of joyful praise, of rapturous thanksgiving, to Him who was with them in the midst of the fire and who was already giving them a foretaste of "the things which God hath prepared for them that love him!"

Much more might be said to show how the grim Destroyer, who was regarded in all ages by those who looked on it only in the light of Nature as the mortal antagonist of man, the extinguisher of life and light and joy, may be transformed by Christian faith into an angel of light, a welcome messenger sent to set free from the trammels of sin and of a limited, struggling existence, to relieve from the oppression of guilt and the taint of moral and physical corruption, and conduct the liberated spirit into that bright and glorious city of our God where "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain," into which

"there shall in no wise enter anything that defileth" for ever and ever.

Oh why then should any delay to make sure of a salvation so glorious, a faith which not only supports through the battle of life, soothing its sorrows and enhancing and purifying its joys, but in that last dark hour, when earthly solaces and possessions can avail nothing, enables the trusting soul to overcome its last enemy and go forth to claim the "glorious inheritance of the saints in light" bought for it by the atoning blood of the Redeemer in whom it has believed?

Strange infatuation, that beguiles men to neglect that on which hope in death and the welfare of eternity depend! How must those who realize the tremendous issues at stake, and the insensate indifference of the multitude, who placidly turn away and leave them unheeded, join in the inspired cry, "Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!"

No, no, it is not dying,
To go unto our God;
The glowing earth forsaking,
The journey homeward taking,
Along the starry road.

No, no, it is not dying,
Heaven's citizens to be;
The crown eternal wearing,
And rest unbroken sharing,
From care and conflict free.

No, no, it is not dying,
To hear the precious word,
Receive a Father's blessing,
For evermore possessing
The favor of the Lord.

No, no, it is not dying,
To wear a lordly crown;
Among God's people dwelling,
The glorious anthem swelling,
Of Him whose love we own.

Oh no, this is not dying,
Thou Saviour of mankind;
Streams there are overflowing
Of love, no hindrance knowing;
Drops only *here* we find.

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee,
Let the water and the blood
From thy wounded side that flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.

Nothing in my hand I bring—
Simply to thy cross I cling;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears for ever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and thou alone.

While I draw this fleeting breath,
When my eyelids close in death,
When I soar to worlds unknown,
See thee on thy judgment-throne,
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee.

CHAPTER III.

The Redeemer from Sin.

Wouldst thou the pangs of grief assuage?
Lo! here an open page,
Where heavenly mercy shines as free,
Written in balm, sad heart, for thee.

HAD the banquet set before the Sicilian courtier been pervaded by a subtle poison, embittering every delicate viand and bringing certain death to the partaker, he would scarcely have enjoyed it more than he did with the knowledge that the glittering sword was suspended by a hair above his head. And there *is* a poison, subtle and deadly, spreading its baleful effects through every particle of the banquet of this world's enjoyments which is spread before us.

In considering the insufficiency of

earthly blessings alone to produce full and satisfying happiness, the most serious alloy of all was not taken into account. That alloy, that poison, embittering the cup of life and blighting so much of fair and radiant promise—do we need to name it?—is *Sin!*

Some theorists dispute the doctrines which Revelation teaches and which experience would certainly seem to confirm —that sin, so hateful and so deadly, is a constituent element of our fallen human nature. Certainly, its actual prevalence, as widespread and universal as humanity itself, would seem to be most easily explained by the revealed teaching that man's moral nature received at the period of our progenitors' fall—that bias toward evil which we are wont to call original sin. But so long as the *fact* of the tendency which evinces itself in the countless forms of vice and crime with which this fair earth is defiled, and in the deep moral degradation of so large a pro-

portion of the human race, cannot be disputed, it is the less necessary to contend about the *theory*. However it has come there, no human being can doubt the existence in the world of an overpowering weight of sin, loading down men's hearts and consciences with its grevious burden, counteracting human progress, and infinitely aggravating all the other evils to which mortality is subject. Who that has cast a thought upon the world around him has not shrunk, heartsick and distressed, from the horrible revelations of cruelty and crime with which the history of the past and present is teeming? Who has not felt in his own experience, time after time, that uneasy sense of dissatisfaction with himself, that regret which will not be stilled, that accusing voice of conscience which *will* make itself heard in spite of all attempts to overpower it, which, in their intensified form, we call *remorse?* The imperial purple has no power to protect its wearer

from its judicial visitations; the conqueror of millions cannot defend himself from the grim spectres it sends to haunt his lonely hours. The ghastly suicide, the murderer's despairing self-surrender, too often testify to the goading torments of this inevitable executioner, personified by the old Greek mythology in the Furies, who pursued the offender with their implacable vengeance to the remotest bounds of the habitable globe.

But while it is only in cases of aggravated crime that remorse becomes so intense and unendurable, who has not felt it in its more modified degree? Who does not know its persistent pressure, destroying peace of mind, and often making it impossible to enjoy circumstances the most outwardly favorable? Is there any life so pure and innocent as to be unfamiliar with the restless discomfort produced by the dissatisfied sense of wrong-doing? Even where the conduct seems the most faultless to outside observers, the conscience, if en-

lightened and true, will often have to mourn over a wrong feeling or a wrong action, perhaps known only to itself. Even children know it well—the dull aching of the heart, the punishment that cannot be eluded, escape other punishment as they may. From the cradle to the grave we are subject to the visitation of this retributive action of our own judgment, which spoils so many of our happiest seasons and adds a poignancy to sorrow which nothing else can equal. For though there are many good and noble elements still in human nature—germs of what *may* be developed into more than angelic perfection—still the evil ones are sufficiently prevalent to verify the poet's words:

> "Poor race of men, said the pitying spirit,
> Dearly ye pay for your primal fall;
> Some flow'rets of Eden ye still inherit,
> But the trail of the serpent is over them all."

Nor is the sense of discomfort, or of anguish occasioned by remorse, the only

present penalty of sin. There is mingled with it—sometimes latent, but generally more or less consciously—the intuitive conviction, common at least to all tolerably enlightened minds, that the sin which is troubling the conscience has also interposed a barrier between the soul and the pure and holy God, who "cannot look upon iniquity." There is, disguise it from ourselves as we may, the sense of the present displeasure and of the impending punishment from Him whose righteous hand holds the scales of justice, and who "is angry with the wicked every day." This sense, this conviction, may be crushed down with steady determination, it may be covered over with false glosses and fond self-flattery, but in all cases where the "writing of condemnation" has not been taken away through Jesus Christ, conscience will sooner or later awake and wreak a terrible vengeance for its temporary repression.

Probably this conviction that our sins

stand between us and a sin-hating God, that while we remain in them we must be estranged from his favor and communion, is the chief reason why we naturally try to escape from the thought of God, and endeavor to find a spurious happiness in other things. It was only when Adam was conscious of sin that he dreaded his Maker's voice and hid himself from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But there is a better way than thus escaping from our Father's presence and going farther and farther away into the "far country," from which we must be brought back by famine and suffering, if at all; it is the way Jesus Christ has opened by his atoning blood—the way God himself devised through the Lamb he hath provided for a burnt-offering; it is to

Lay our sins on Jesus,
The spotless Lamb of God;
He bears them all, and frees us
From the accursed load—

frees us from the pangs of troubled conscience that sadden our life, frees us from the burden of sin that weighs our souls to earth, frees us from the apprehension of eternal destruction which gives its overpowering horror to the death of the unrepentant sinner. Well did Bunyan, in his Pilgrim's Progress, compare sin to a "burden" clinging to the pilgrim and impeding him on his way, but which rolled off for ever at the foot of the cross. We *cannot* raise ourselves from our fallen condition, or struggle on to the eternal city, into which "nothing that defileth can enter," with this burden clogging our steps and wearing out our strength. But it *can* be taken away from us by a strong and able hand, and *will* be, if we choose it. "Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

Nor is it only the heavy burden of *past* sin that so weighs us down, and from

which we may be so completely relieved by this glorious salvation. Sin, by the time we begin to think of resisting it, has already gained such a hold upon us that it has established an invisible network of fetters around us—fetters which we at first begin *really* to *feel* only when we struggle to break them. We could as soon "make one hair white or black" as prevent ourselves in our own strength from falling under the dominion of the sins that so easily beset us. Struggle as we might, we could not keep ourselves for one whole day "without sin." Hate ourselves as we may, with bitter self-condemnation, for the hasty words or acts of passion, the unkind temper, the temptation weakly yielded to, the uncharitable words, the censorious judgment, the mean action, the failure in truth, the countless deviations from right of which every day finds us more or less guilty, we cannot, however sincere may be our after regret, prevent ourselves from falling again into

the very same snare. The more faithfully and untiringly we struggle, the more do we feel our own utter helplessness—the more shall we acknowledge the truth that it must be a stronger arm than our own which can break the fetters of sin and relieve us from their constant pressure. Perhaps it is only after we have tried earnestly to "resist, striving against sin," that we know their full force. When we swim *with* the stream, we cannot estimate the force of the current, and a lax conscience, shutting its eyes to much that is sinful, will find its course comparatively easy where a more faithful one would find it encompassed with difficulty. But there is no doubt which has the truer perceptions, and though the lax conscience may hold its way peacefully for a time, there is a day coming when all these secret sins will be "revealed in the light of God's countenance." "Know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

Feeling then our inability to free ourselves, either from the load of past guilt on the conscience or from the trammels of our *present* tendencies to fall into sin, well may we rejoice in the great Sacrifice once offered up "to bear the sins of many." Nothing else can be of any avail.

> "Not all the blood of beasts
> On Jewish altars slain
> Could give the guilty conscience peace,
> Or wash away the stain."

Not all the penances and mortifications that have ever been endured by saints and anchorites in the hope of lifting from their hearts the heavy burden of guilt and breaking the habits of sin already formed, could exercise the slightest power in doing either. But the way is open, the Helper is near. "For this cause" came Jesus Christ into the world. "He shall be called Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Everywhere the same truth is

declared, that the atoning blood of the man Christ Jesus is the remedy. Typified by every sacrifice that sent its smoke to heaven from Israelitish altars, *he* is made known to us as the one offering, once offered, which has the atoning power. On him we may lay our burden of sin, and it shall be put far from us as the east is from the west. For

> "Christ, the heavenly Lamb,
> Takes all our guilt away—
> A Sacrifice of nobler name,
> And richer blood than they."

That impassable wall of separation between us and God once broken down, we can arise and go unto our Father, and be received back into the sunshine of his favor—the light of his reconciled countenance. And *that* is "the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." All others are deceitful gleams, illusive meteors, luring on to destruction, not shedding over life its true, inextinguishable sunshine.

It is a glorious liberty with which Christ makes his people free—the liberty from the bondage in which sin has been holding us. It is no mere *future* salvation that he died to win for us, no simple promise of security from the everlasting burnings which God has declared to await those who harden their hearts in rebellion against him. That promise of security were *much*, but it is a far richer and fuller salvation that we are offered. The redemption he bestows is a redemption from the *present* power of sin—a redemption on which we have entered the moment that the contrite heart has come to lay its burden at the foot of the cross. The moment the change from death unto life has passed over it, it is no longer in bondage to the principle of evil, for stronger is He that is with it than he that is against it.

True, there may be many a fall and slip, for the evil principle in our nature is not at once extinguished, and old habits long indulged will often reassert their power.

But the opposing principle has been imparted which will in time overpower the other; the life received from Christ, flowing through the whole being, will counteract the poison-current of spiritual death. The guilt-stained sinner has been washed in the blood which alone can purify; and he "that has been washed needeth not save to wash his feet" from the daily stains contracted in the life-journey. The purifying fountain is always open to wash away the daily sin; the strength which Christ gives is ever ready to enable his followers more and more to resist the temptations of the way. As his sanctifying grace gains greater and greater power, the alloy of sin will disappear more and more; its clouds will cease to darken the horizon of the soul, till the gradual purification has its perfection in the absolute purity of the freed spirit which emerges from the cold dark of death into the unclouded brightness of the realms where sin and death shall be for ever unknown.

From such a salvation as this, so glorious and so freely offered, how strange that any should ever turn carelessly away!

If to all the prisoners immured in some dreary dungeon came the offer of immediate liberation, would not each and all gladly grasp at the welcome chance of escaping from their hated captivity and going forth once more in the free air and pure light of heaven? Yet the spiritual bondage in which we all are bound by nature is infinitely heavier, more fatal, than any external imprisonment; and the world of spiritual life and light on which the freed ones enter, how infinitely more glorious than anything the present imperfect and transient world can show! For "if Christ shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

Come, ye sinners! heavy laden,
Lost and ruined by the fall;
If you wait till you are better,
You will never come at all.
Sinners only
Christ the Saviour came to call.

Let no sense of guilt prevent you,
Nor of fitness fondly dream ;
All the fitness he requireth
Is to feel your need of him ;
This he gives you,
'Tis the spirit's rising beam.

Lo ! the incarnate God ascending
Pleads the merits of his blood ;
Venture on him, venture *wholly*,
Let no other trust intrude.
None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good.

By thy birth and early years,
By thy human hope and fears,
By thy fasting and distress
In the lonely wilderness,
By thy victory in the hour
Of the subtle tempter's power,
Saviour, look with pitying eye,
Hear our solemn litany!

By thine hour of dark despair,
By thine agony of prayer,
By thy purple robe of scorn,
By thy wounds and crown of thorn,
Cross and passion, pangs and cries,
By thy perfect sacrifice,
Saviour, look with pitying eye,
Hear our solemn litany!

CHAPTER IV.

The Constraining Love of Christ.

Now, my soul, thy voice upraising,
Sing the Cross in mournful strain;
Tell the sorrows all amazing,
Tell the wounds, the dying pain,
Which our Saviour
Sinless bore, for sinners slain.

EVERY one has heard the fable of the traveler on whom the sun and the wind alternately tried their power to force him to take off his cloak. The wind in vain blew its fiercest gusts against him—he only drew his cloak closer to resist its chilling blasts. But when the sun came forth, pouring its warm rays around him, he gladly threw off the cloak, confessing its irresistible power.

The fable, true in merely human re-

lations, is fully realized in the divine. The allegiance of the heart cannot be forced by any commands or any dread of penalties, however certain. Not all the denunciations of the righteous judgments of God upon sin, not all the terror which the contemplation of eternal punishment can inspire, have power to subdue the proud obstinacy of the heart of man. *Fear* cannot conquer his pride or call forth his love, though it may awaken him to consider the danger of his position, and check him in his reckless career toward destruction. There are moods in which a man will dare in impious pride to defy the Almighty and risk the misery of eternity, rather than bow his haughty spirit and kneel, a humble suppliant, to ask pardon of the God he has offended. In such a state of mind, judgments and chastisements will often harden instead of softening, and nerve the soul to a more desperate resistance against the almighty Being at whose absolute mercy it is, who is able in a mo-

ment to doom it to everlasting misery or raise it to everlasting bliss.

But "what the law could *not* do," "God sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh" has done. What judgments were powerless to effect, self-sacrificing love has accomplished. The heart that once *really feels* what Jesus Christ has done for it in yielding himself up to suffer agony and death for its salvation can scarcely maintain its obdurate position. The "love of Christ constraineth us" to at least *some* grateful love in return, and sin is seen in its true deformity when it is recognized as the cause of the suffering which the pure and holy Jesus submitted to endure. The suffering, redeeming love that shone so brightly along that toilsome, painful path which led the Son of man from the manger at Bethlehem to the cross on Calvary, comes home to the heart with a tenderer, closer touch than even the constant loving care of the heavenly Father, whose kind providence supplies

our needs and watches over our lives from our helpless infancy. The *sacrifice* of the Cross, the unspeakable, self-devoting love of the crucified Saviour, ought surely to be, and in all ages have been, the most powerful influences for softening our hard hearts and bringing them back to that God who "so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." A world lost in sin required an infinite Sacrifice for its atonement, and the terrible nature of its lost position may be somewhat brought home to our hearts by the reflection that that Sacrifice was none other than the eternal Son of God. Had any way less costly been open, we may suppose it would have been taken; but rather than for ever lose his wandering children, God gave up his Son, and the Saviour came to offer *himself* a willing sacrifice, that all who come unto him might have *life*—the true life which God's favor gives, in time and throughout eternity.

It is wonderful, when we think of all that this mighty act of redeeming love involves, that it does not produce a far more powerful effect upon the hearts of those who believe in it *historically*, that we can ever lose the sentiment of overpowering admiration, intense gratitude and venerating love which it would be expected always to awaken. But familiarity does, according to the old proverb, very generally produce indifference at least, if not contempt. With many, perhaps with most minds the daily sight of the most sublime objects will gradually diminish the awe and admiration with which they are at first beheld. It is the same with the discoveries of science. Wonderful inventions, which our forefathers would have regarded with bewildered amazement, almost with incredulity, are used or passed by without a thought. The Atlantic telegraph, for instance, the first establishment of which as an accomplished fact sent a thrill of wonder through the civilized

world, has passed into the rank of ordinary every-day appliances, and we read with no more surprise the news which has traveled to us with lightning speed across three thousand miles of stormy ocean than we do that from a neighboring town.

And in accordance with the same principle of human nature, our familiarity from childhood with the "old, old story" of the cross has led us to take too much as a matter of course that amazing redemption which "angels desire to look into." We hear it, we accept it as a matter of belief, and then we pass on our way and allow ourselves to be swallowed up in the trivial concerns of our earthly life, to the almost total exclusion of the theme which awoke the angels' song above the plains of Bethlehem. A brief, cursory attention to it on Sunday, accompanied with becoming respect, is considered quite sufficient for the comprehension of this most wonderful of all events; and often, even on *Sundays*, the *attention* is wholly

wanting. What wonder then that such multitudes in Christian lands, to whom has been repeated over and over again, in every variety of form and diction, the history of a transaction unique in its intrinsic interest, and touching their most vital interests more closely than anything in the universe besides, have never once had their hearts really stirred, their gratitude truly called forth, their love in the smallest degree awakened, by the knowledge of that which, one would think, had only to be known to bind them for ever to their Saviour in the tenderest of bonds.

But let us, shutting out for a little time the noise and bustle and exciting pursuits of the world around us, retire for a season into the heart's solitary chamber of contemplation, and allow our thoughts to dwell upon and realize that incomprehensible incarnation which was made visible eighteen hundred years ago in the manger at Bethlehem. Let us try to feel in some degree the height of heavenly bliss from

which our Lord descended to become the companion and friend of publicans and sinners. Let us think of those years of poverty and toil, of loneliness and persecution, of patient uncomprehended labor in doing his Father's work among those who besought him to depart out of their coasts or took up stones to cast at him. Let us think of him as healing the sick, raising the dead, opening the eyes of the blind, and then of the closing scene of all these labors—the agony in the garden, when even to *his* spirit the prospect before him seemed to be overwhelming. Let us think of the judgment, the scourging, the agonies of the cross, suffered at the hands of the men whom he had come into the world to save, the scornful words and bitter jeers, and last, and most terrible of all, that desolating sense of darkness and desertion which found expression in the cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Surely, if we would bring these scenes

and actions vividly before our minds, we should have an infinitely greater appreciation of the amazing depth of love which voluntarily gave itself up to suffer these things, a far deeper gratitude to Him who suffered them, and at least the *beginning* of the love which he asks as the only return that he desires, or that we can make! But while we listen to the story of the cross with our outward ears only, and do not allow its influences to penetrate into our hearts and minds, it is no wonder that so many turn away indifferent and cold, without one spark of genuine emotion awakened by the divine and devoted love, which might, one would think, melt the most stony heart.

On a bright spring day, a poor woman was carrying her only child along a lonely, unfrequented road among the mountains, when a sudden snow-storm arose; speedily it obliterated every track and darkened the air with the heavy snow-flakes which the fierce gusts whirled around the unfortu-

nate traveler. She struggled bravely on for a time, but struggling became vain, and she looked eagerly for some place of refuge. She had reached a mountain-pass that lay in her way, a mile beyond which she knew she could find a rude shelter; but when she endeavored to pursue her way along the gorge, the blinding storm of snow which was rushing through it made it impossible for her to proceed. It was equally impossible to return, and at least a temporary shelter must be found or destruction was imminent.

Among the huge scattered fragments of granite which lay around the base of the lofty precipices above her head she at last found, under a projecting ledge of rock, a sheltered nook protected from the fury of the storm. Here she could crouch, with her child pressed to her bosom, and gain a little breathing-space and rest for her exhausted frame. But still the storm was unabated; the snow-drifts were increasing, and as hour after

hour passed and the evening approached, the bitter cold and the whirling gusts of snow, penetrating even into her place of refuge, seemed to make it imperative that she should endeavor to find some better protection for her child. She could not struggle on against the storm while encumbered with its weight, but she could leave it in her present place of shelter and endeavor to make her way home to procure assistance, or perish in the attempt.

The child was scantily clad, however. To preserve it from being chilled to death by the bitter cold, the mother took off almost all her own clothing, and wrapping it around her little one, laid him tenderly in a deep crevice in the rock, among heather and fern, and left him fast asleep in his narrow, stony cradle while she went forth once more into the blinding snow and suffocating drift.

Not far, however, did her already exhausted strength enable her to hold on her way. Her scanty raiment gave almost no

protection from the freezing blast, and, benumbed and exhausted, she sank down in the snow to sleep the sleep of death. She was found next day, when the storm had passed off, by the neighbors who came to search for her, and not far off the child, warm and safe in the crevice of the rock, was discovered by his cries and carried home uninjured by the mourning friends who bore also the corpse of the mother who had given her life for his.

Half a century afterward the son of the aged pastor who had attended the funeral of that devoted mother was, in his own old age, preaching in a great city to a congregation of that mother's countrymen. It was the occasion of the administration of the Lord's Supper, and in reference to that solemn rite the clergyman, in the course of his sermon on the great love of Christ—the "love which seeketh not her own"—told his hearers the story of the poor mother whose self-sacrificing death had left a deep impression on

his boyish mind. After narrating the circumstances which have been told, he said: "If that child is now alive, what would you think of his heart if he did not cherish an affection for his mother's memory, and if the sight of her poor, tattered cloak, which she had wrapped around him in order to save his life at the cost of her own, did not fill him with gratitude and love too deep for words? Yet what hearts have *you*, my hearers, if, over these memorials of your Saviour's sacrifice of himself, you do not feel them glow with deeper love and with adoring gratitude?"

A few days afterward the preacher was sent for to visit a dying man. The sick man, who was a stranger to him, seized his hand and told him that *he* remembered him. He was a soldier who had been in all the quarters of the globe and had seen good service for his king and country. Having gone back to his native land invalided, and as it proved dying, he had

gone into that preacher's church to hear the gospel once more preached in the language of his youth. There he heard the story, well known to him, of his own mother's love, for he was the poor widow's son, the child she had saved by leaving him, warm in her own clothing, in the crevice of the rock. His mother's memory he said he had always loved and revered, and his only earthly desire was to lay his dust beside hers in the old churchyard among the hills. "But, sir," he exclaimed, "what breaks my heart and covers me with shame is *this:* until now I never saw, with the eyes of the soul, the love of my Saviour in giving himself for me, a poor, lost, hell-deserving sinner. I confess it! I confess it!" he exclaimed, with tears and deep emotion. "It was God made you tell that story. Praise be to his holy name that my dear mother has not died in vain, and that the prayers which I was told she used to offer for me have been at last

answered; for the love of my mother has been blessed by the Holy Spirit for making me see, as I never saw before, the love of the Saviour. I see it! I believe it! I have found deliverance in my old age where I found it in my childhood—IN THE CLEFT OF THE ROCK, but it is the ROCK OF AGES!" Then clasping his hands, he repeated with great fervor, "Can a mother forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? They *may* forget, yet will I not forget thee."

Could we only *realize* our Saviour's exceeding love as we do that of our earthly friends, we should be more likely to yield him the return he asks. Could we see him the infinitely tender, loving, patient Friend, human as well as divine, a veritable brother in the flesh, "wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities," on whom has been "laid the iniquity of us all," and who, out of the fullness of his love to each of us indi-

vidually, bore the heavy burden even to agony and death, surely the hearts that are softened into melting tenderness by the comparatively slight and shallow affection and devotedness of an earthly friend, would not harden in stony coldness against the pleadings of the infinitely more loving Saviour! Would it not, to many a weary and heavy-laden soul—laden with the cares and troubles of this world—give life a totally different aspect could Christ be really *felt* as the ever-present Friend he is or will be to those who trust him?—a Friend who rejoices in our well-being and sympathizes in our sorrow; who is glad when we prevail over our spiritual enemies and grieved when we fall under the power of temptation; a Friend to whom we may open our burdened hearts, whom we may consult in perplexity and lean upon in difficulty; a Friend whose strengthening grace we may experience at every step of life's pilgrimage, and whose everlasting arms we may feel around us when we step

down into the chill, dark shades of the valley of the shadow of death!

Truly such a Friend is indeed "more precious than rubies—more to be desired than the most fine gold!" Such an absolute trust and reliance as we may have in the Saviour would be worth the labor of a lifetime to secure. The conditions of securing it are simple enough. "Without money and without price" this greatest of all blessings may be had. Yet how many feel as if they could, like the devotees of old, perform long and painful pilgrimages, undergo painful penances and macerations, submit to almost intolerable privations, more easily than yield the homage of the *heart*—believe *with the heart* on the Lord Jesus Christ!

And how is this love to be awakened in hearts so dead to it by nature? No one can compel himself to love "the brother he has seen," by simply telling himself, and even believing, that it is his duty to do so. How much less can he thus make

himself love God, whom he has *not* seen! But the way in which we generally come to love human friends is by observing their attractive and lovable qualities, or by letting the mind dwell upon the evidences of *their* love for us. It is in the same way, though to an infinitely greater *degree*, that we can nourish our love for the man Christ Jesus. We can allow our minds to dwell upon his words and actions, so full of truth and love and tenderness, on his overflowing sympathy with sorrow, his ready succor in affliction, his indignation against oppression and wrong, his gentle kindness to the little children. We can try to picture him to our minds as he walked, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, yet a man with tastes and feelings like our own. We can see him on his lonely way, suffering from poverty and hunger and weariness, often without a place "where to lay his head," spending long nights on the cold mountain side in prayer. We can image him to our minds harassed

and worn out by labor and sorrow and mental conflict, till his countenance in the prime of early manhood seemed to those who looked upon it to bear the impress of the cares of nearly half a century!* We may try to follow him, as with prematurely worn-out frame he toiled for the last time along the road to Jerusalem, and treading the slopes of Olivet once more, sat for the last time among the family loved at Bethany. Then, if we can bear it without shrinking, we may, like the "women of his company," follow him afar off to the darkest scenes of all—the garden, the judgment-hall, the *Via Dolorosa*, the foot of the Cross!

Surely as we *there* "stand beholding," and know that all these things were suffered for *us—each* of us *individually*, as much as if no other human being had ever lived—one would think it required nothing else to

* We may infer this from the observation of the Jews when they said, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?"

melt our cold, dead hearts to gratitude and love. Yes! one thing more is wanted—the Holy Spirit's enlightening, vivifying power to touch our hearts and open our eyes, that we may *know* him in truth. *Then* shall our hearts indeed "burn within us," while he "walks with us by the way and opens to us the Scriptures."

And this constraining love of Christ is the only influence that can call forth in our hearts *true* love toward *man*. There are indeed many tender ties in mere human feeling, many sweet affections left us still to brighten the otherwise dreary path of life—"fair flow'rets of Eden" all. But beautiful as these *natural* affections are, which also have their original source in God's creating love, still that true, unselfish, perfect love toward our fellow-men, *as such*—love that can bear unkindness and scorn and ingratitude, and love on still—love that "suffereth long and is kind, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, beareth all things, believeth all things"—

can be the offspring only of genuine love for its divine incarnation and prototype. This alone can conquer our natural selfishness and self-seeking, break down the barriers of cold exclusiveness, overcome resentment and vindictiveness, and transform our thousand repelling points into centres of loving attraction. In Christ alone are we really *brethren*—not a mere aggregate of creatures, each seeking to hold his own and get the better of his neighbor in the great "struggle for existence." Christian love is the only true social alembic—the *only* way and the *simplest* way of effecting that helpful harmony and union which men have sought by a thousand conventional semblances and artificial bonds—most inefficient substitutes !—to promote.

One of the most deservedly popular fictions of a modern novelist describes a sudden transformation of character in which, by means of a dream or spiritual visitation, a churlish, miserly man, bound with the selfish habits of years, is converted

into a genial, kindly being, overflowing with love and benevolence toward his kind. The tale is prettily told, and contains thoughts and suggestions which might well have their influence on hard and unfeeling hearts; but, as a portrait of anything within the range of possibility, the picture is quite untrue. No dream, no spiritual visitation, no appearance of one raised from the dead, could possibly have the effect of casting out the long-seated demon of selfishness and enthroning love in its vacated place.

Christ received into the soul, Christ taken as the Saviour, alone can work the mighty change and impart true harmony to our discordant lives. *Love* is the true solution of the problem of life, the true happiness for which man was created—the pure and holy enthusiasm which redeeming love awakens—first for God and then for man.

"Herein is love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his

Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another!"

When I survey the wondrous cross
  On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
  And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
  Save in the death of Christ my God;
All the vain things that charm me most,
  I sacrifice them to his blood.

See, from his head, his hands, his feet,
  Sorrow and love flow mingled down;
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
  Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
  That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
  Demands my soul, my life, my all.

Why halt thus, O deluded heart?
Why waver longer in thy choice?
Is it so hard to choose the part
Offered by Heaven's entreating voice?
Oh look with clearer eyes again,
Nor strive to enter in, in vain.
Press on!

Remember, 'tis not Cæsar's throne,
Nor earthly honor, wealth or might,
Whereby God's favor shall be shown
To him who conquers in this fight.
Himself and an eternity
Of bliss and rest he offers thee.
Press on!

Then break the rotten bonds away,
That hinder you your race to run,
That make you linger oft and stay;
Oh, be your course afresh begun;
Let no false rest your souls deceive;
Up! 'tis a heaven ye must achieve!
Press on!

Omnipotence is on your side,
And Wisdom watches o'er your heads,
And God himself will be your guide,
So ye but follow where he leads.
How many, guided by his hand,
Have reached ere now their fatherland!
Press on!

Oh, help each other, hasten on;
Behold, the goal is right at hand;
The battle-field shall soon be won,
Your King shall soon before you stand.
To calmest rest he leads you now,
And sets his crown upon your brow.
Press on!

CHAPTER V.

What shall the End be?

God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.

ALL that has been said upon the momentous subject under consideration has presupposed the mental assent of the reader to the truths received by the majority of the Christian world as directly revealed by God to man. If there be doubts regarding *revelation itself*, that question must be fought out elsewhere; these pages are not intended to be argumentative, but simply to rouse, if possible, those who, believing Christianity *theoretically*, are delaying with culpable and infatuated indifference to believe *with their hearts* on the Lord Jesus Christ.

If the mind of the reader be indeed

harassed with honest doubts as to the authenticity of the Christian religion, we would not bid him stifle thought, but rather urge him to think the subject *honestly* out, laying aside all uncandid bias, prosecuting his inquiries with the help of the light he can procure, and in the spirit of deep earnestness befitting a question of such unspeakable importance to his eternal interests—a question not of *temporal*, but of *spiritual* life and death. Let him study above all, with thoughtful care, the writings which we believe to be the Word of God, and try in all sincerity to settle for himself the question whether it is not, as it professes to be, the voice of God speaking directly to his soul. Let him, above all things, study the words of Jesus himself, feeling, as did one bewildered by doubts who in this way found rest, that if these really are the words of Jesus, he is sure to know the meaning of them, and will give the needed light to the wandering soul who asks it from him. And let him

not grow weary of asking. Such a blessing is worth striving for, and in time, if he be in earnest, he will find, as many others have done, his doubts melting away and light "unspeakable and full of glory" dawning on his heart.

But if the man who is still out of Christ has not even the excuse of *doubt*, how is the carelessness and procrastination of his position at all defensible? If he concedes that the things which have been said are *true;* if he acknowledges that a hope in Christ is the only thing which will give real happiness in life and peace and safety in the prospect of death; if he feels that he has a load of sin to be removed, and that its weight upon his conscience and its prevailing power over his actions can be removed only by the atoning and purifying sacrifice of Christ *appropriated by faith;* if he believes in the infinite love of Jesus Christ in suffering and dying for those sins of his,—how can the carelessness and indifference of still delaying to make that sal-

vation his own be for a moment defended? Would he act thus in regard to any earthly affair of importance, putting it off from day to day, when any moment might see his time of choice and probation terminated abruptly and without warning? Would he be guilty of such ingratitude to any earthly friend, who had made a costly sacrifice to secure some great benefit for him, as to allow by his own carelessness the gift to be neutralized and his friend's sacrifice to be thrown fruitlessly away? No; it is only in spiritual concerns, where the world of sense steps in with its obscuring influence, and in the instance of the Saviour's unspeakable love, that this ingratitude and this carelessness prevail. Men float on with the tide in pleasant forgetfulness, caring only that their happy dreams be not disturbed, till at last comes the fatal plunge, and they find themselves launched on the ocean of eternity! Must we not believe that it is the great enemy of souls himself who, that he may make the surer of his prey, thus

lulls the heart and conscience into their perilous slumber, even as the Arctic traveler is impelled to yield to the insidious influence of the drowsiness which is overtaking his exhausted frame, and sink into a sleep from which there is no earthly awaking?

One of the most common delusions by which men allow their eternal safety to be imperiled is that thought that at no distant day, as soon as a "more convenient season" shall arrive, when the subject now engrossing their minds shall be disposed of, or the important business now harassing them shall be brought to a satisfactory conclusion, they will begin in earnest to attend to matters the importance of which they cannot but acknowledge. But how can they be sure that the time they are looking forward to will ever arrive? Will not one interest follow another, one exciting concern after another occupy their thoughts, until perhaps death comes without warning? "*Now* is the accepted time," God

himself tells us; he gives us no encouragement to look forward to any other.

And even if that more convenient season were really to arrive, how can they be sure of improving it? Will their minds be more ready to enter upon thoughts which now they turn from with instinctive aversion? Will not habits of sin be growing more difficult to break? Will not the spirit of this world be ever more and more asserting its power, and crowding out higher and purer thoughts? Is not the heart growing ever harder—less likely to melt into contrition, to feel a Saviour's love, to undergo the second birth, without which we "*cannot* enter into the kingdom of God?" The longer a man lives without God in the world, the more completely does he lose all care for his higher birthright, the more thoroughly does he sink under the dominion of the visible world, the more impossible does it seem that he should be turned to "the things of Christ" by anything short of a miracle.

It may be that in spiritual things as well as in temporal there is "a tide in the affairs of men," that there is a season which passes away in which repentance and reconciliation with God is possible, but that if the season be allowed to pass by, the lower nature becomes master, sin is confirmed, and the heart undergoes that "hardening" which God speaks of in his Word as one of his judgments upon determined sin. *When* this point is reached no human being can ever tell, either for himself or others; but that it *is* reached sometimes, even in this life, too many sad examples prove. It may be hastening on for the reader of these pages. This voice of warning, if it touch his heart or conscience, may be the very last that shall ever do so. Oh let him not then pass it by unheeded! Let him not imagine that he can at *any* time stop and retrace his downward course! When the adventurous boatman, floating in the calm, placid-looking water above Niagara Falls, allows

his little skiff to drift with the swift current, he does so on the supposition that at any moment a few vigorous strokes of the oar will establish his course in the opposite direction. But the insidious hidden current, with its deep, strong pull, carries him too far before he is aware. When he tries to retrace his course it shows him that it has now attained resistless power, and sweeps him relentlessly along toward the white, seething rapids, the prelude to the foaming cataract and the headlong plunge into destruction.

Of a similar nature is the delusion which tempts men to trifle with the question of repentance, allowing themselves to believe that they have it in their power at any time to return to God, and at worst, that when death seems to be approaching, they will be able to make their peace with him. But setting aside altogether the consideration that the grace of God in Jesus Christ is given us that we may meet *life as well as death* in its strength, can any one who

realizes what sickness, what a deathbed is, seriously entertain such a thought? When the frame is racked with pain, when deadly languor or heavy stupor prostrates the mental energies, when the effects of physical suffering darken the perceptions of the mind, and the patient's attention, even if his mind be clear, is distracted by his bodily sensations,—can *that* be a time when things which in health seemed too formidable to be willingly met, can be taken up and disposed of? "If in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" When the mind needs all the peace which God can give to sustain it, what will become of it if distracted by the consciousness of guilt and the fear of an unknown eternity? It has been well said that there has been one instance of salvation at the eleventh hour, that none might despair, and but one, that none might *presumptuously hope*. And if death should come, as it

does to many, suddenly and without warning, what then?

But perhaps the most dangerous and deceitful fancy of all, leading to certain destruction, is the idea entertained by many of trusting vaguely in the infinite mercy of God—the idea that he will be found too merciful to punish sin as his word leads us to believe, and that in some way or other everything will be made right for them after death, without their having taken the trouble in this life of coming to Christ for salvation.

Certainly we cannot limit the mercy and love of God or set any bounds to his infinite resources. But can we *presume* upon it so far as to suppose that if we willingly neglect the means he has pointed out, the wondrous salvation he has provided for us at such a tremendous cost, he will overlook our perversity and ingratitude, and find some *other* way to save us after we have turned away from the salvation offered to us through the sac-

rifice of Jesus Christ? As wisely might the tiller of the soil permit the season for sowing his crops to pass by unheeded, trusting that in the reaping-time, through the goodness of God, all will "come right." As well might the man in a burning house or on a sinking ship refuse the rescuing hand which at its own peril would save him, trusting that through the same goodness and mercy the flames would not burn nor the cold waters drown, but in *some* way all would "come right." In the moral, as in the physical world, no law of God is more certain than that "as a man soweth so he shall reap"—that if he neglect the *means*, he cannot expect by some specially favoring dispensation of Providence to gain the *end*. Surely these are considerations entirely left out of sight by those who condemn as severe and bigoted the doctrine that "*he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth upon him.*"

And even if we could believe that after

refusing the salvation offered through Christ during the whole of our mortal life, we should yet, in the future world, find space for repentance, what reason can we have for hoping that *a second probation, if possible*, would have a different result from the first? Will the bonds of sin be less heavy? will the heart be less hard? will it be easier for the soul to cast off the fetters which sinful habits have imposed? Is not the power of sin rendered stronger by indulgence? Does not the heart become harder the longer it persists in alienation from God. Does not every step in the downward course render it more difficult to retrace our steps? Can we suppose that the heart which has resisted the pleadings of Christ's love, the agonies of his passion, the winning appeals of his mercy, the solemn warnings of God's providence while on earth, will be more likely to listen to any voice of mercy that could penetrate the kingdom of the lost? Would the experience of purgatorial

fires be likely to bow in penitence and self-abasement those to whose hearts the love and sufferings of Christ have been displayed in vain? "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." Does it not follow, from every analogy we are able to trace, that the choice between good and evil made in this life must go on to the end? Must we not say that the soul which has turned away from a Saviour's sacrifice, yielding to sin, has begun its downward progress, and must sink lower and lower in sin and impenitence, farther and farther from reconciliation with God or desire for it, till it is lost in a fathomless abyss of sin and darkness and horror, which we shudder to contemplate, where "the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched?"

If these things be true, why should there be any delay in making the decision which *must* be made? "Choose ye this

day whom ye will serve." If the choice of serving *Christ* will solve the problem of life, produce harmony where now there is discord, make human life bright with love and joy and peace from heaven, and cause death to be seen merely as the portal to a life infinitely nobler, richer, fuller than we can now conceive—a life stretching in perfect bliss throughout all eternity —what earthly matter of interest can approach *this* in importance and urgency?

And there is no other WAY except that a man should be born again—that he should enter into a living union with Christ as his Saviour. No pomp of ritual, no exactness of formalism, no theoretical belief or external profession, will serve as a substitute for the change of *heart* which is impressed upon us as the one thing needful. No efficacy of sacraments, or absolution of priests, or prayers of the Church, or even of loving friends, will avail to produce this change. Only the *individual choice*, the "believ-

ing in the Lord Jesus Christ," will effect it.

And yet this "believing in Christ" often seems more difficult than the performing of the most arduous penances, the severest tasks, would be. The very freeness and simplicity of the way is a stumbling-block to many. They cannot get over the feeling that "some great thing" should be done by them to win a boon so immeasurable as eternal life. It is just our incapability of doing anything for it that our heavenly Father wishes to make us feel. "Except ye be converted, and become as *little children*, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." We cannot make ourselves believe in and love Jesus; but we can *choose* to lay ourselves at his feet, and he will give us the belief and the love. We can offer him the sacrifice of our *wills*, the only sacrifice he desires. We can *choose* between good and evil, can choose to "renounce the devil and his works and the carnal desires of the flesh, so that we

will not follow them nor be led by them." We cannot carry our choice into effect in our own strength, but we can *will;* God will perform the rest. The *choice* must be ours—the *work* will be Christ's; but we have no reason to suppose that God, all-powerful as he is, will ever change the heart of a human being *against his deliberate will and choice.*

But how ready he is to do it if we will let him! How is his ear ever open to our slightest cry, if it be an *earnest* one! We have only to throw ourselves upon him, acknowledging our helplessness, and he "will undertake for us," and give us the spiritual life that Christ came to procure for us. The work of sanctification or purification must be a gradual one. It may be long before we shall have the strong tendencies to evil uprooted, long before we shall be able from the heart to submit our will to God's. But the work will be ever going on, and we shall have strength for the warfare. "He that is

washed needeth not, save to wash his feet." If our *hearts* are washed in Christ's blood, we shall need only purification from the stain we contract by the way—the sins of actual life we are daily betrayed into; but the load of guilt that lay between us and God will be removed for ever. And if any reader of this book is unconscious of that load of guilt, let him pray that his eyes may be opened while there is yet time; *for it is there*, and if he sees it not now, he shall assuredly see it some day, when it shall rise to overwhelm him.

What, then, shall the end be? Union with Christ, rest in him, increasing holiness, love, joy, peace, a death of hope and trust in Jesus, an eternity of blessedness in God inconceivable by human imagination? Or, rejection of Christ, proud self-dependence, widening separation from God, increasing subjection to sin, a death out of Christ, an eternity of inexpressible degradation and sinking ever deeper and

deeper away from hope and light into the outer darkness? Reader, the choice is yours, and these issues hang upon it. God grant it may be for you and for me, the choice of the "better part, which shall never be taken away from us!"

Just as I am, without one plea
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidst me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come!

Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come!

Just as I am, though tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings within and fears without,
O Lamb of God, I come!

Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind,
Sight, riches, healing for the mind,
Yea, all I need, in thee to find,
O Lamb of God, I come!

Just as I am, thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come!

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